DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 278 058 CS 505 455

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TITLE Participative Management in a Theological Organization.
PUB DATE Nov 86
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (72nd, Chicago, IL, November 13-16, 1986). Document contains small print.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrators; *Church Related Colleges; *Communication Research; *Employer Employee Relationship; Higher Education; *Management Systems; Organizational Change; *Organizational Communication; *Participative Decision Making; Power Structure; Theological Education
IDENTIFIERS Likert Model for Organizational Effectiveness

ABSTRACT

A study examined increasing employee participation in a Roman Catholic seminary using an analysis of management style to display a profile of recent changes in the seminary's management not unlike similar changes made in secular organizations. Management behaviors relevant to participation were analyzed according to Likert's taxonomy, which separates management styles into four categories ranging from highly directive to participatory. Results indicate that the seminary has shifted to a management style that allows students, faculty, and trustees more input into management of the institution. In Likert's ideal organization, subordinates are motivated solely by rewards and involvement, communication moves up, down, and sideways, and decisions are made throughout the organization, but in an integrated fashion. The paper concludes that it is not likely that the seminary either will or should aspire to this ideal. Governed by the Vatican, the seminary will be restrained from extending involvement further. (SRT)

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VE MANAGEMENT IN A THEOLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

Presented to the Speech Communication Association

November, 1986 Chicago, Illinois

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PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT IN A THEOLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

The literature on participative management suggests that the involvement of members is critical to organizational health and survival (Likert, 1967; Lowin, 1968). Responsible leadership of complex organizations reacts to rapidly changing conditions by drawing on the knowledge and motivation of its employees (Kanter, 1983a; Peters & Waterman, 1982). Those who favor participative management argue that it will result in adaptability and higher performance; this reasoning is frequently bolstered by the assumption that participative management is an ethical imperative (Sashkin, 1984).

Those who study participative management have tended to focus on large, industrial organizations; however, Maister (1985) argues that participatory approaches have value for smaller firms which may be service oriented or professional. The question of how far participatory management may be extended with good results is intriguing and under-investigated.

The present study describes increasing employee participation in a system where many readers would not expect to find it: a Roman Catholic seminary. It uses an analysis of management style to display a profile of recent changes in seminary management which are not unlike those of secular organizations. The conditions which preceded these changes and their implications are discussed. While it may be unusual to imagine participatory practices in a theological climate, every organization is intrinsically hierarchical: differences are in degree, and not in kind. Findings about the benefits and limitations of participatory management in a seemingly authoritarian structure should also offer insights to researchers and practitioners who are interested in secular organizations

with a conservative tradition. Hopefully, the study will be not only an interesting paradox, but a chance to learn about the generic problems managers face in altering communication patterns for the purpose of increasing involvement.

Participatory Management and Communication

It is claimed that the essence of managerial effectiveness is successfully influencing members to accept organizational goals as their own (Coch & French, 1948; Vroom & Yetten, 1973). Individuals who participate in goal setting are less likely to hold rigidly to a diverse lot of personal goals, and are more likely to transact with others a set of commonly held goals (Lewin, 1951). To the extent these group goals are congruent with organizational mission, the group becomes an agent in its success. In addition, research examining the effects of participation on goal setting finds that employees are likely to set higher goals for themselves then mangers would have, usually accept and commit to them more genuinely, and tend to be more satisfied with their work environment (Bandura, 1977; Erez, Earley & Hulin, 1985).

The case for participative management applies to making specific work related decisions as well as to setting general goals. Involvement of organizational members in decisions works partly because of basic psychological needs, partly because of information distribution. Argyris (1957), in his landmark study, Personality and Organizations, pointed out that the structure of many jobs and organizations frustrates a normal adult's need for authority. Mature employees, given insufficient control over their own behavior, exist in an unhealthy organization. Hackman and Oldham (1980) added the importance of managerial

work, especially task completion, to the basic human needs a successful organization must fill.

Finally, Katz and Kahn (1978) envisioned a needs model including not only authority and meaning, but also interpersonal contact. While it is clear to communicator scholars that both control and task completion would be negotiated between managers and employees, the desire to relate to others in the work place is clearly a communication phenomenon. When employees participate in groups, the method itself becomes the ground for satisfying human needs for interpersonal contact (Isenhart, 1983).

Information distribution is also offered as a rationale for participatory management; this is another communication concern. No one leader is sufficiently wise to make complex decisions alone. While managers may use employees in either a consultative or delegative manner, they need the knowledge of those who work mostly directly with variables involved in the decision (Denison, 1985; Richardson, 1985). Employees will participate willingly when set a standard for information exchange which is open and nondefensive; they will continue to contribute ideas as long as they can see a relationship between their suggestions and subsequent management decisions.

Despite the cognitive and motivational advantages of participative management, this approach is not guaranteed. A number of researchers make the point that not all participative management is successful; some attempts may even result in worse decisions than a manager might have made acting alone (Hinckley, 1985; Locke & Schweizer, 1979). Sashkin (1985) notes several contingency factors that affect participative management: psychological contingencies such as member

expectations, organizational contingencies such as the degree of interdependency among employees, and environmental ones, such as rapid changes in technology.

A number of scholars have investigated variables related to the success of participatory management. Jago and Vroom (1982) find that men are less likely than women to approach decision making from a participative stance. Richardson (1985) concludes that the greatest barriers to success are lack of commitment from top management and the way in which participation is introduced. Schuster & Miller (1985) look at the opposite end of the leadership chain and predict that employee involvement will be stalemated wherever supervisors are held to the traditional performance measures, because in order to meet production levels, they feel that they cannot sacrifice power to employees. None of these cautionary studies argues against the principle of participatory management; each one seeks to explore the contingencies which are associated with success or failure, in order for the principle to be effectively implemented.

Research Questions

Given this understanding of participative management, what style of management will be found in a theological institution?

Will the usual investigative categories (goal setting, decision making, etc.) yield a profile which is internally consistent?

If some of the categories are not consistent, how might this be explaine?

Will the usual relationships between participation and satisfaction prevail here?

What are implications for participative management in secular organiztions?

Background on the Seminary

Some comments on both external and internal events which preceded a more participative style at the seminary (hereafter referred to as St. Tobias) should be helpful. Generally, American churches are moving away from a single leader model, to more consultative and participative models (Elias, 1979, p. 189). In addition to this national trend, a thrust toward shared leadership in the Roman Catholic Church began in the 1960's. The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), the gathering of Roman Catholic church leaders, set the stage for more involvement of lay people in ministry. Church leaders decreed that the laity were to become involved in liturgy, education, and counseling. As a training institution, St. Tobias opened its graduate programs to adults who wished to take leadership in these areas.

The new student population introduced diversity conceptually and demographically. In the late 70s, the students were 100% young male seminarians, studying for Masters in Divinity; today's group is composed of half seminarians and half lay students. The latter include people from a variety of work settings. Two-thirds are women and three-quarters are affiliated with denominations other than Roman Catholic. Seminarians live dormitory style, on campus, thereby reinforcing their similarities and explaining the label which attached to the secular group: "commuter students." A smaller percentage of the faculty are lay people and/or non-Catholic. The diversity in work force which characterizes many organizations over the past decade is represented here significantly. Kanter (1983b, p. 21) writes that organizational change is ". . . a series of emerging constructions of reality, including revisions of the past, to correspond to the

requisites of new players and new demands." The new demands of Vatican II and the new players in the student body assure that revisions must be made to insure organizational health and survival.

Not only do these secular students bring diversity of experience with less authoritarian management style, but a number of them have concerns about leadership issues decided by Church hierarchy. In particular, the Vatican's stand against women's ordination is a source of irritation and grief for a number of Catholic lay and Episcopalian women religious. Anglican students resent the Vatican's prohibition which keeps them from participating in communion, since their church is less exclusive toward Roman Catholics. These larger issues color relationships between men and women, Catholics and Episcopalians, as they interact in the seminary. As Likert (1979, p. 7) suggests, institutions cannot deal successfully with the demands associated with complex membership relying on traditional organizational methods. The conflicting demands of subgroups in a diverse community are best addressed by leadership which is willing to champion supportive behavior, integrative goals, de-emphasized status, and the use of consensus.

Other external events have had a bearing on organizational leadership. Two years ago a merger with a smaller seminary precipitated management changes. A new Rector/President was installed who sought to bring a blend of family and professional styles to St. Tobias. While American seminaries are guided by Rome, the guidelines are more concerned with preserving correct dogma than in dictating organizational communication. The new leader has used this latitude to develop the institution in ways which would allow it to embrace the training of lay people, as well as continue its institutional mission of preparing priesthood

candidates for ordination. The need to innovate drives theological as well as secular organizations.

Method

The analysis of management style employed in this study was developed at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan by Rensis Likert (1967). It enables the researcher to categorize management style into one of four categories, or "systems." It has been widely used and is especially useful to communication scholars since the schema deal with concepts critical to human communication: leadership, control, decision making, etc.). Since the underlying assumption is that effective management must elicit participation, through communication, it seemed an appropriate choice for this study.

The four systems into which management style may be categorized range from highly directive to participatory (see Table 1). System 1 resembles Theory X (McGregor, 1967) in that communication is primarily downward, most decisions are made at the top, and there is little trust between management and employees. System 2 managers have some trust of employees, but decisions are still reserved for top levels, and most of the information flows downward. In contrast, communication flows both up and down in System 3. While broad policies are made at the top, many specific decisions are delegated to lower levels of the organization, and substantial trust prevails between manager and employee. System 4 embodies a Theory Y (McGregor, 1967) communication climate. Trust between levels is complete, decision making is pervasive, and information flows in all directions.

The schema of Likert's systems is leadership, motivation, communication, decisions, goals, and control (see Table 2). Each of these organizational variables (numbered) is assessed by responding to several probes (lower case letters). Responses to these probes are plotted across a scale which allows the researcher to choose among four possible conditions for closest fit, in order to determine a system state. For instance, if the response to the decision probe, "At what level are decisions made?" is "At the top," the respondent plots this point under the System 1 column. The position of all plots should yield a profile of management style, with regard to participation.

The data which are analyzed by Likert's taxonomy are management behaviors observed to have relevance to participation. The observations were made by a communication specialist/management consultant who has been a participant observer in the organization for six years. Since the observer is not Catholic, these data were confirmed and refined by a Catholic consultant in organizational development who is conducting a study of leadership in American seminaries. This consultant is not affiliated with the seminary but evaluated it as one of the subjects of his study.

Results

Leadership

The first organizational variable which Likert considers is leadership (see Table 2). In order to determine which system best describes an organization, he asks the following questions:

"How much confidence and trust is shown in subordinates?"

"How free are they to talk to superiors about job?"

"How often are subordinates' ideas sought and used constructively?"

Leadership in higher education may be construed from the ways in which a Rector/President uses his faculty and administrative councils. In most American seminaries, these bodies are consultative to the Rector/President, whose decisions are supposedly informed, but not determined by their deliberations (Nygren, 1986). A common complaint of this system is that the Rector/President may show little confidence in subordinates' abilities to contribute meaningful input. In addition, St. Tobias shared with secular universities the procedures which structure faculty meetings into win/lose confrontations. Too large for effective problem solving, the faculty council tended to vote "no" on most innovative recommendations, and to feel little responsibility for implementation when it voted "yes" (Likert, p. 245).

While this profile of past leadership clearly fits System 2, it should be noted that freedom to talk to superiors was best characterized by System 3. While some members might censor themselves for personal reasons, common membership in a priestly order offsets the usual apprehension about losing one's job or chances for advancement in secular organizations. Administrators and council members, especially the priests, appear to feel quite free about registering their opinions with the Rector. This relationship between faculty/administrators and Rector has changed only slightly since the new executive assumed control.

There is evidence of increasing participation in the constructive use of others' ideas. The current Rector and Dean have restructured the work flow through faculty council in an effort to gather ideas in a more constructive manner. Instead of lengthy faculty council debates, followed by votes which only occasionally influenced the Rector's decisions, a committee system has been

established. Committees of five address the areas of greatest relevance to faculty: executive, library, faculty concerns, curriculum, and formation (spiritual formation for ministers). These groups study issues, generate proposals, and make recommendations through the faculty council to the Rector. If past results are replicated, we may expect the twenty members of these committees (approximately half the faculty), to have higher commitment and motivation for implementing their decisions (Cartwright and Zander, 1968). This approach, while still in the initial stages, promises to be a more proactive, involving approach to leadership. Clearly, this approach would not be instituted unless management felt a substantial amount of trust in subordinates, and they felt quite free to contribute. The current leadership situation qualifies as a System 3.

Motivation

In order to assess motivation, Likert asks (see Table 2):

"Is predominant use made of fear, threats, punishment, rewards, or involvement?"

"Where is responsibility felt for achieving organizational goals?"

"How much cooperation and teamwork exist?"

In this category, the organizational dynamics of the seminary are more similar to non-profit and volunteer organizations than they are to the for-profit corporation. That is, while several lay faculty members depend on their salaries for a living, the bulk of the "subordinates" are priests who have made a vocational choice which excludes financial rewards, and students whose rewards are non-monetary. As at most universities, faculty salaries are largely determined by seniority and only somewhat affected by performance. Given this removal from corporate organiza-

tional rewards and punishments, motivation is more internally driven and less subject to organizational pressures. Rewards tend to be all or nothing rewards--a faculty member's contract is either renewed or it isn't. And, motivations tend to be more personalized than they might be at for-profit organizations. That is, recognition from highly valued colleagues is felt to be rewarding; being excluded from colleagueship is more punishing because other rewards are absent. In these circumstances, the importance of involvement becomes critical; community building/teamwork building is an essential component of keeping subordinates motivated.

In the past, the need for community building/teamwork in seminaries was often cited but seldom observed. At St. Tobias, the need was heightened when the demographic and conceptual divisions of the student population resulted, rather suddenly, in a diverse body whose internal differences threatened to balkanize the community. The past Rector's reliance on a few trusted members to advise him may have contributed to the sense of frustration expressed by many. In Likert's language, faculty and students felt removed from responsibility and more conscious of divisions than of commonalities. Fear and threats were experienced by priesthood students, especially at the times of their annual evaluations, when continued eligibility is appraised.

The new Rector began his term of office with a faculty/staff meeting which clearly signaled his intent to motivate through involvement. The restructuring of faculty council, described above, has offered incentives for members who had felt divorced from responsibility to be more active in the smaller working committees. One of these committees, faculty concerns, has scheduled a series of faculty speakers who will bring various points of view to the concept of

andragogy: this plan represents a recognition that the changed student body needs to be taught differently, and an emphasis on sharing insights within the community, rather than calling in experts. These internal professional development workshops are intended to motivate instructors through appeal to collegueship and socializing which will follow each presentation.

Student government has doubled the number of social activities which include commuter students. Student evaluations have been restructured to be more collaborative; the substance of the session will be the self-evaluation written by the student himself. He, instead of the Dean, will now name to his evaluation committee the faculty members he feels would be most helpful to his self-growth. Copies of final evaluation reports are no longer kept from students. All of these changes define an organization which is System 3 on the Likert scale.

Communication

Likert uses the term "communication" to assess the direction of information flow in an organization, and the effectiveness with which messages are received (see Table 2). The specific probes are:

"What is the usual direction of information flow?"

"How is downward communication accepted?"

"How accurate is upward communication?"

"How well do superiors know problems faced by subordinates?"

In this area, the usual System 2 to System 3 transition is more complex. As mentioned earlier, the fact that most administrators and faculty belong to the same priestly order and reside together results in a larger volume of information exchange than would take place in a typical graduate institution. Common

religious affiliation probably accounts for more latitude, as well in communicating across roles. The fact that two men may be Dean and novice instructor and thus be expected to relate differentially is somewhat balanced by the fact that they are concelebrants at Mass and that, in terms of core identity (membership in the priestly order), they are equals. Their order's policy of rotating members to various positions in different seminaries is undoubtedly a factor in diminishing the importance of role limitations on organization communication. Therefore, were one to plot only the priest faculty, administrators and seminarians, the "communication" variable has fallen and would continue to fall into Systems 3.

As the student population diversified, information sharing tends to take place within subgroups; currently there is less institution-wide member involvement. The life styles of commuter students are not well understood by those in the religious order. Many of the priests find the students, especially the women students, abrasive and hard to get along with. Certain commuter student requests, when brought to administrative council, elicited the response, "The church has never been, will never be, a democracy." In turn, the commuter students find some of the priests dictatorial and accept their comments with suspicion or downright rejection. With some justification, they sense that their viewpoints are not understood at the top; even administrators and faculty, who feel sympathetic are unlikely to know the problems they face. The growing diversity of population has resulted in slippage from a System 3 to a System 2 profile.

Decisions

Given the centrality of participation in Likert's conceptualization, it is not surprising that "decisions" are part of his schema (see Table 2). He tests for involvement by asking:

"At what level are decisions made?"

"Are subordinates involved in decisions related to their work?"

"What does the decision making process contribute to motivation?"

Responses to these probes return the organizational pattern to a System 2 to 3 shift. The administration has abandoned a very centralized decision posture by shifting more responsibility to small groups of faculty; students have more input into important decisions. A Board of Trustees, composed of both clerics from outside the seminary and laity, will also share in decisions at a policy making level.

The question of whether this expanded involvement is contributing to motivation is premature. Certainly, it is hoped that enhanced motivation will follow the additional delegation of decision making. However, changing the level of decision making and the degree to involvement does not change the fact that all groups are ultimately consultative to the Rector. Probably, the motivational power of these changes will depend to a great extent on his acceptance of student, faculty and administrative input. If he ignores recommendations or is not careful to explain and interpret when he decides against them, the process could easily backfire. The decision process appears to be moving toward System 3, but, repeated rejection of member advice could send it hurtling back toward System 1.

Goals

Likert tests an organization's commitment to involvement by asking (see Table 2):

"How are organizational goals established?"

"How much covert resistance to goals is present?"

The response to the first question suggests the familiar shift from System 2 to System 3. Previously, management determined goals in conjunction with a board of five clerics, following the approval of regional directors from the order. Contributions from the general seminary membership were neither broadly nor openly solicited. The description listed under systems, "After discussion, by orders," appears to describe the consultative style which predominates today. While the new Board of Trustees is charged with determining institutional goals, there is a growing awareness of the need for groups at different levels to influence their specific goals.

The same shift from System 2 to 3 is not observable in terms of covert resistance. As with the communication variable, the increasingly diverse student body has introduced strains which are pressuring the organization back from a "3" to a "2." A number of examples of covert resistance might be elaborated; most of them may be described as minor annoyances, but several constitute highly visible and negative reactions of one subgroup to another. Under the category of "minor annoyances" goes the repeated locking of the door to the ladies lounge, presumably by those who intend to harass women students and faculty. Under the heading of "visible and negative" go plans for a demonstration outside of the Christmas services by Protestant student not allowed to take communion. Misunderstandings

between various subgroups appear first as covert, and subsequently as overt resistance.

Control

Questions about control complete the schema. Likert asks (see Table 2):

"How concentrated are review and control functions?"

"Is there an informal organization resisting the formal one?"

"What are cost, productivity and other control data used for?"

The shift from System 2 to 3 is exemplified by studying faculty evaluations and requests for sabbaticals. In the past, these matters were negotiated between individual faculty and the Dean. Faculty council voted approval, but the Rector's decision was final. How or why he came to his conclusions were matters for general speculation.

Today, evaluations and requests have been re-conceived as the responsibility of the faculty concerns committee. This group has designed a uniform evaluation instrument, to be used in an annual review process. The evaluation data are student evaluations, records of scholarly and professional activities, and institutional needs. This process has been enthusiastically greeted by faculty and staff, but it is too recent a change to assess fully. If it is implemented as designed, and if the Rector does not overturn committee recommendations often or without reason, System 3 should be an appropriate characterization of control at St. Tobias.

The assessment of the presence of an informal organization resisting the formal one must be similarly tentative. While it is possible to point to examples of informal resistance in the past (disgruntled faculty reacting to the merger in

a them/us configuration), such comments are heard less frequently. Hostilities seem to have cooled over the summer vacation, members spoke this year of getting off to a fresh start; however, the temptation to return to familiar subgroups and comfortable, like-minded people constantly leaves the institution open to the possibility of informal resistance. Again, the response on the Likert plot is under System 3, but with the realization that conclusions here are more suggestive than definitive.

Discussion

St. Tobias, responding to the "new players and new demands" cited by Kanter (1983a), has shifted to a management style which allows students, faculty and trustees more input into management of the institution. A new Rector and a new Dean have instituted a series of changes which allow decisions to be studied more broadly, and those most affected by the decisions to make formal recommendations. Leadership is demonstrating its trust of subordinates by referring to them many matters which were previously decided at top levels with little subordinate involvement.

Control over subordinates has been loosened, from a review process which was not subject to scrutiny, to one which is constructed and applied by a faculty committee. Superordinate goals are set by the Board of Trustees, with various subgroups at different levels responsible for generating and evaluating their own goals. Faculty and administrators have more involvement in the decision process through a changed structure of committee work; students have more input into decisions concerning their welfare, programs of study, and self-evaluation.

The intent of these changes is to enhance motivation. In an organization where monetary rewards are either absent or highly constrained by seniority, the sense of member involvement becomes even more critical than in a for-profit organization. It is believed that the connection between leadership and other outcome variables is even more marked than it might be in for-profit organizations (Smith, Carson, & Alexander, 1984). This being the case, it is incumbent on the management at St. Tobias to continue the transition from System 2 to 3, and to react to recommendations responsibly.

The findings with regard to communication are not consistent with other categories, nor would they mimic patterns typically found using Likert's scale in secular organizations. The usual direction of information at the seminary in the past was much more "down and up" and "accurate" than one would expect in a System 2 organization. Presumably, membership in a common religious order, along with a common residence, accounted for considerable exchange of information, and that before the integration of lay students superiors did understand problems of subordinates.

Going beyond the direction and accuracy of information, however, it appears that downward communication often was accepted with suspicion and the additional information was associated with lower levels of member motivation. This suggests that the amount of communication, by itself, cannot create the sense of involvement, commitment and motivation which leaders desire. In the current situation, there is less information and probably less accurate information, exchanged among subgroups in the organization, due to its increased diversity. This organization's profile shows deviations from the System 2 to 3 profiles on three items related

to communication, reminding communication scholars of the importance of other variables on such "givens" as communication flow and accuracy.

Conclusion

The application of high involvement assumptions to a theological organization reveal many similarities to secular institutions. Sashkin's (1985) contingencies appear to predispose this organization for success with participative management: first, lay students and faculty introduce expectations for involvement; second, students, faculty and administrators are clearly interdependent; and, third, changes in the environment, e.g., Vatican II, mandate member involvement. Richardson's (1985) concerns also should be satisfied, in that top management is committed, and has attempted to introduce change gradually.

Likert's ideal organization will continue to evolve into a System 4 model where subordinates are motivated solely by rewards and involvement, communication moves up, down and sideways, and decisions are made throughout the organization, but in an integrated fashion. It is not likely that St. Tobias either will or should aspire to System 4. Governed by the Vatican, clearly a less participatory organization, the seminary will have boundaries on extending involvement further. Already, a group of evaluators commissioned by the Vatican are working on recommendations for American seminaries which are supposed to be more conservative than policies currently in effect.

Limitations on the success of increased participation not only come from the "parent corporation," as they do in many fields, but from both "the new player and the new demands." The diversified community brings expectations about a more democratic approach to decision making, but it also brings the added challenge of

building teamwork among those whose contrasting life experiences and values ill prepare them for smooth cooperation. In secular organizations, there are expected tensions around organizational roles (manufacture versus marketing, line versus staff, etc.). At the seminary, role differences are compounded by attitudes toward Church dogma and Protestant denominations. As in secular organizations, the balkanization of these various subgroups is one of the greatest challenges to institutional health. Increasing the flow of accurate information among these fracturing subgroups is a strategy which is suggested by Likert's profile. It is in the area of intergroup communication that participatory management has the greatest room for improvement, the greatest hope for the future.

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